



THE ORTHODOX CHRONICLES

A Newsletter of the Atlanta Inter-Orthodox Parish Association
Vol. 1, No. 5, October 2022

The Atlanta Inter-Orthodox Parish Association (AIOPA) is a team of clergy and laity representatives from different canonical Orthodox parishes around the Atlanta area. The goal of AIOPA is to foster connections among different parishes and jurisdictions, to develop a strong sense of one local Orthodox Christian Family and, as such, to contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church in the United States of America as defined by the Assembly of Bishops. AIOPA is a committee of the Atlanta Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood (AOCB), which seeks to bring people the knowledge of the Orthodox Church and to assist those throughout the city of Atlanta who are in need. Both AOCB and AIOPA use www.atlocb.org for communication.

Letter from Fr. Christos Mars, Chairman of AIOPA, Annunciation Greek Cathedral, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA)

Saint Romanos the Melodist

To many people, in many cultures, music is an important part of their way of life. Looking at our own culture, there is very little chance that we will not encounter music in our day-to-day lives. With technology, music can be taken anywhere. Long gone are the days of Walkmans and portable CD players. Today we have streaming services, and apps, all running on our phones to play music. Music is at our fingertips; all we have to do is press a button.

Music and singing play an important role within the life of the Church as well. In the Divine Liturgy the first verse that is chanted before we sing the "Σῶσον ἡμᾶς... Save us, O Son of God..." comes from Psalm 104 and says, "Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while

I have being." This verse is the essence of how music and singing are used to benefit us. We praise God through singing, and we should be praising Him as long as we live.

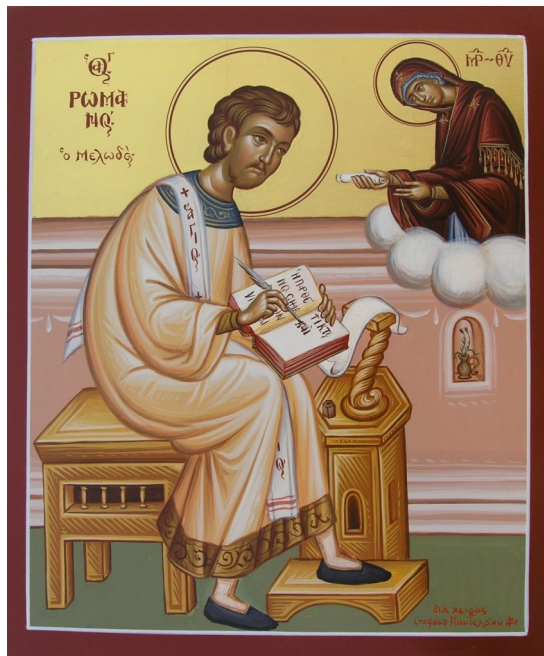
(cont. on pg. 2)



(cont. from pg. 1) Within the Church there are many saints and people who have contributed to singing and praising God through song and hymns. One of the most famous is Saint Romanos the Melodist, whose feast we celebrate on October 1st.

Saint Romanos was born in Emesa in the latter part of the fifth century. He was baptized as a young boy and developed a great love for the House of God. When he came of age, he served as an acolyte, lighting the lamps and preparing the censer. After moving to Beirut, he was ordained to the diaconate and assigned to the Church of the Resurrection. He had a rather mediocre voice, but his pure and simple heart was filled with love for God, and to assist at the church services gave him the greatest joy.

During the reign of Emperor Anastasios I, the young deacon moved to Constantinople. He led an ascetic life of prayer and fasting, but in his humility he thought of himself as being rather worldly. He had a special love for the Theotokos, and would go at night to pray in the Blachernae Church. Patriarch Euthemios loved Romanos for his many virtues, and paid him the same wage as the singers and readers who were more educated and more talented. The others resented this and made fun of Romanos for his evident lack of musical and theological training. Romanos himself was painfully aware of these defects; he longed for a melodious voice worthy of leading the faithful in praising God.



On the day before Christmas, Saint Romanos was assigned to lead the singing that evening at the all-night vigil. He was responsible not only for the singing, but for the text of the hymns. After everyone had left, he remained in the Church and tearfully asked the Theotokos to help him. Exhausted, he fell asleep with his sorrow. In answer to his prayer, the Theotokos appeared to him in a dream. She handed him a scroll and gently said to him, "Here, eat this." Romanos did so and awoke overcome with joy and the lingering presence of the heavenly visitor.

When it came time that night for him to sing, Saint Romanos received the patriarch's blessing and stepped onto the ambo (pulpit) and began to sing: "Ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον..." or, "Today the Virgin gives birth to Him Who is above all beings..." The emperor, the patriarch, the clergy - the entire congregation - listened in wonder at the

profound theology and the clear, eloquent voice of Saint Romanos. Later, Saint Romanos told the patriarch about his vision, and the singers who had made fun of him asked the saint's forgiveness.

It should be noted that the Kontakion of the Nativity - as we know it today - is only the prologue of a much longer poem which consists of over 30 stanzas, or Οἴκοι (Oikoi). With the Nativity Kontakion, which has been dated to the year 518, Saint Romanos began a period of prolific creativity. Saint Romanos is said to have composed more than 8,000 similar hymns, or Kontakia, celebrating the feasts of the ecclesiastical year, the lives of the saints and other sacred subjects.

(cont. from pg. 2) He is considered the patron saint of Church musicians and on the Sunday closest to his feastday of October 1st, our Holy Archdiocese has designated that Sunday as National Church Music Sunday. A day for us to experience *“Singing praises to God as long as we live.”*

The story of Saint Romanos is inspiring and gives us an understanding of how important hymns are to our Church. However, not all hymns are created by humanity, some are given to us from God. I would like to share one more powerful story with you. We are all familiar with Mt. Athos, a spiritual republic that is an independent state which pledges allegiance only to the Almighty God. This state has existed with monks, hermits and holy men living there since the third century.



The Virgin Mary is considered the “Patron Saint” of this republic. In the monastery of Karyes, there is an icon of the Virgin Mary called “Ἄξιον Ἐστίν” (Axion Estin), meaning *“It is truly right to bless you...”*

During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on most Sundays, we hear the beautiful and inspiring hymn named for this Icon. This hymn was originally written in the year 720 AD by Saint Cosmas the Hymnographer, Bishop of Maiuma (October 12), another great hymnographer of our Church. The hymn, however, began with the words, *“Τὴν Τιμιωτέραν...”* or, *“Greater in Honor...”* It was well over 100 years later that this hymn was added to the Divine Liturgy, but with an added beginning that was the result of the following miraculous event.

A group of monks were conducting an all-night

vigil before the icon of the Theotokos. They suddenly noticed a monk standing to the right of the icon whom they did not recognize. He was unknown to the monks, and no one could explain his abrupt presence. This unidentified monk began to chant the hymn that was written by Saint Cosmas, but with a different beginning: *“Ἄξιον ἔστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς...,”* or, *“It is truly right to bless you, Theotokos, ever blessed, most pure, and mother of our God.”* The monk then explained to the others that he was the Archangel Gabriel and that these words should be added to the hymn. The Archangel then vanished from their sight, leaving the monks amazed at the power of God.

Since the day that this happened—June 11, 980 AD—the additional words to the hymn of Saint Cosmas have been sung by all Orthodox Christians around the world.

Now the verse from Psalm 104, *“Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have being,”* begins to have a whole new meaning. Praising God with our song is not new. God created us with a voice, some of us have better voices than others, but we should all use our voices to praise God. We should all sing the responses to the Divine Liturgy while either our chanters or choir leads us. Most of our books say that the response to the priest should be from “the people,” while some incorrectly say “choir” only. It is the responsibility of the people, as well as the choir or chanter, to sing praises to God. The words *“Θεία Λειτουργία,”* or, *“Divine Liturgy”* mean *“the divine work of the people.”* Therefore, we should sing, praises to God and be blessed to hear each other sing, praises to God.

We look forward to our continues praising of God with “happy voices” as we continue our work with AIOFA.

AIOPA updates

The **monthly AIOPA meeting** will be held on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM on Zoom. This was the time that worked best for everyone through a Google poll. Please plan on attending if you are in the workgroups!

We would like to officially welcome Fr. Miladin, Mirjana and Borko, representing the Sts. Peter and Paul Serbian Orthodox Parish, to the AIOPA family.

- Fr. Miladin Blagojevic is joining the Social WorkGroup.
- Borko Komnenovic is joining the Religious WorkGroup.
- Mirjana M. Brockett is joining the Charity WorkGroup.

We had an introductory meeting on September 6 going through the AIOPA history, plans and progress.

Please welcome Fr. Miladin, Mirjana and Borko and add them to the respective WorkGroup communications.

The **Hierarchs' blessings, guidance and support** are critical to maintaining the momentum for the AIOPA work. His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel of ROEA/OCA, gave his blessing to send the following link (<https://bit.ly/declarationunity>) to "A Declaration for Orthodox Christian Unity in America". He was the first to sign the document and asks that you consider signing it and sharing it with your parish. We are looking forward to expanding and maintaining the direct dialog between parish representatives and their respective Hierarchs for all parishes participating in the AIOPA effort.

We have continued **featuring our clergy** in [The Clergy Spotlights](#), sharing a little bit about where they came from, their journey in becoming a priest, hobbies and family. We now have six spotlights and are looking forward to receiving more from our clergy.

Visit

<https://www.atlocb.org>
**for up-to-date information
about the AOCB and AIOPA
and a calendar of events.**

Highlights of Past Events

Inaugural Pan-Orthodox Cross Dive in Macon, GA

On Sunday, September 11th, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Macon, Georgia in association with AIOPA (Atlanta Inter-Orthodox Parish Association), hosted an Inaugural Pan-Orthodox Cross Dive event. The day began with Orthros and Hierarchical Liturgy at Holy Cross, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta. He was assisted by Rev. Fr. Christos Mars of the Annunciation Cathedral and Rev. Fr. Theodore Ehmer, parish priest of Holy Cross. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Alexios bestowed upon Fr. Theodore the office of Oikonomos before celebrating a Memorial Service in memory of those who lost their lives on September 11th, 2001.

After the Divine Services, the clergy and the faithful traveled a short distance to Lake Tobesofkee where Metropolitan Alexios, assisted by the other clergy, conducted a Small Blessing of the Waters before making their way onto a boat for the Cross Dive. High school students from multiple parishes in the Atlanta area participated in this Inaugural Cross Dive, which, God willing, will be continued annually on the Saturday before the celebration of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. High School senior Nikolaos Constantinides of the Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta retrieved the Cross and received the blessings of His Eminence. Afterwards, the faithful partook of lunch and fellowship with one another to round out the beautiful day.



Charity Opportunities

Volunteers and Donations Needed for *Loaves and Fishes*

The Loaves and Fishes program is a pan Orthodox outreach that started in the late 1980's by Father Jacob Myers of blessed memory. Serving out of the St. John the Wonderworker Parish, today the program is still working diligently to serve a warm meal every Monday through Friday to roughly 40 homeless and needy individuals as well as providing a bagged meal to-go. Food and monetary donations as well as volunteers allow this program to continue its outreach. Please consider getting involved by becoming a regular donor or offering the gift of your time. Specifically, donations of socks and ponchos are requested. For more information or to make a donation, you can visit our website:



<https://www.saintjohnwonderworker.org/why-loaves-fishes>

November 1-30 | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Click for Kids | AIOPA Online Charity Campaign

Your support has the power to make a difference. Each year, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta treats hundreds of thousands of kids. As a not-for-profit, generous contributions from fundraisers help to ensure that CHOA can continue to provide the best possible care to kids now and in the future.

By fundraising through [Click for Kids](#), you can make a greater impact than ever before. It's simple and fast and gives you the chance to help CHOA by contributing via our [existing AIOPA campaign](#).

You can donate here: <https://www.atlocb.org/events/2022/11/1/childrens-healthcare-of-atlanta-click-for-kids>

November 6 | Meals by Grace | Midway United Methodist Church. 5025 Atlanta Highway, Alpharetta, GA 30004.

Meals by Grace is a no cost, meal program focused to help feed children and their families. Generally, these families have been identified as having a special need by School System Social Workers, Social Workers, and or Church or Community leaders. These families may have with limited or unreliable transportation, experience frequent food insecurity or are working to overcome with a major health or work loss event.

Upcoming Events

October 14-16 | Cumming Greek Festival | Sts. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene Orthodox Church, 3074 Bethelview Rd. Cumming, GA 30040. We're back and better than ever! With free on-site parking, a new festival layout, expanded hours, and updated dining service offerings, we hope you'll come dance, eat, and shout "Opa!" with us once again on our 16-acre property off Bethelview Road in Cumming GA. The Cumming Greek Festival is Forsyth County's largest ethnic event, and we are excited to celebrate with you once again on October 14, 15, and 16, 2022. Join us for a unique opportunity to experience the rich Greek culture. We'll once again have continuous live entertainment, including traditional bouzouki and other live music, and energetic performances from our very own Greek dance troupe!

Once again, let the familiar scents of oregano and garlic, and the luxurious fragrance of coffee and cinnamon take you back to a simpler, tastier place. Our cooks know the secrets to fine Greek cuisine and with all food items available continuously during the festival hours you can take this trip as often as you'd like. Sit and enjoy your meal at our COVID-safe, individual family dining tents and tables.

After you've taken in the fine Greek cuisine, make sure to visit our on-site vendor village and enjoy doing some shopping. You'll be able to find a variety of fun and whimsical items – authentic Greek sailor hats, clothing, ceramics, books, icons, jewelry, gold, and handcrafted wares! They're in a new spot this year, so don't miss them!

There's fun for the whole family here at the Cumming Greek Festival! Not only is there singing, dancing, and shopping, there's also a place for the kids to enjoy themselves.

If you're just passing through and can't stay to eat, drink, and shop, we're also pleased to offer our fabulous drive-thru service. Whether you check out our menu early or make your decisions on-site, you'll order when you arrive, and we'll bring your delicious Greek food and drinks directly to your car!

The Cumming Greek Festival brings all the magic of Greece right to your backyard!

<https://www.cumminggreekfestival.com/>



Upcoming Events Continued

October 14-16 | OCL 35th Annual Conference “Pan-Orthodoxy in Action” in Atlanta | Sts. Constantine and Helen Church, 664 Dickens Road Northwest, Lilburn, GA 30047. Join us to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Orthodox Christian Laity in the Metro Atlanta area where we will feature the impressive progress of the [Atlanta Inter-Orthodox Parish Association \(AIOPA\)](#), an initiative of the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA (AOB). AIOPA consists of clergy and laity representatives from all Orthodox parishes in the Atlanta area whose purpose is to effectively facilitate and maintain pan-Orthodox parish-to-parish communications, activities and cooperation (the “One Church Initiative”).

Registration is required. Admission is free. We look forward to meeting you!

<https://ocl.org/orthodox-christian-laity-35th-annual-conference-pan-orthodox-unity-in-action/>

HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

PROUDLY PRESENTS
THE 15TH ANNUAL



FRIDAY, OCT. 21ST & SATURDAY, OCT. 22ND (11AM-10PM)
SUNDAY, OCT. 23RD (11AM-3PM)

AUTHENTIC GREEK FOOD, PASTRIES & DRINKS • CHURCH TOURS BY FATHER THEODORE
LIVE MUSIC BY BOUZOUKI EXPRESS • DANCING BY MARIETTA DANCERS
RELIGIOUS ITEMS • ART • JEWELRY • SHOPPING AND MORE!



PRE-ORDERS ARE FOR FRIDAY ONLY WITH A LIMITED MENU!

EMAIL US: FESTIVAL@HOLYCROSSGA.ORG

OCT
22



PAN-ORTHODOX YOUNG ADULT HIKE

🕒 9:30am

📅 Oct 22, 2022

Red Top Mountain

50 Lodge Road SE
Acworth, GA 30102



SAT & SUNDAY OCT 22 & 23
1-8PM
YOU ARE INVITED



Romanian Culture
Delicious Food
Great Music
Traditional Dances



ROMANIAN
FESTIVAL

664 DICKENS RD NW
LILBURN GA 30047

Upcoming Events Continued

November 11-13 | Holy Transfiguration Young Adult Retreat | Diakonia Retreat Center, 455 Quail Ridge Road, Salem, SC 29676. For young adults in their 20s and 30s, this retreat will focus on fellowship, service and worship at the beautiful Diakonia Retreat Center. All young adults are welcome but space will be limited, so you are encouraged to register soon.



HTGOC YA RETREAT
November 11-13

Where: Diakonia Retreat Center
Cost: \$25

Includes 2 nights lodging and 4 meals (Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner on Saturday- Brunch on Sunday after Liturgy)

Friday Night: Wine and Cheese Tasting and Boardgames

Saturday: Small service project, group discussion, canoeing, hiking, free time to explore, Vespers, bonfire with hot cocoa and dancing

Sunday: Divine Liturgy and Brunch

Questions?
htgoclighthouse@gmail.com



Register here!

In His High Priestly Prayer to His Father, Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ prayed for His disciples, the members of the Church that He established ... "that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me" (John 17:21).